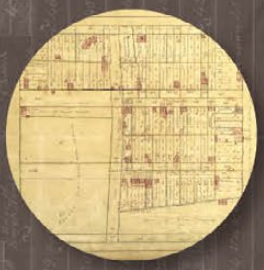
DISCOVER SENECA VILLAGE

Between 1825 and 1857, before the city built Central Park, this area was the location of Seneca Village — a community composed predominantly of African-Americans, many of whom owned property. This was the most densely settled section of the acreage slated for Central Park; by 1855 the community numbered approximately 225 and had 52 homes and three churches.

Explore the history, community, and landscape of Seneca Village in a series of interpretative signs. Begin at the information kiosk A, then visit the sixteen signs throughout the area, in the order suggested. Download or photograph a map of the signs here or pick up a brochure at one of our visitor centers.

To learn more about Seneca Village, visit:
centralparknyc.org/senecavillage



Map Key

1. AME Zion Church
2. African Union Church
3. The Wilson House
4. All Angels' Church
5. Irish Americans
6. Summit Rock
7. Lanes, Lots, and Streets
8. Housing
9. Tanner's Spring
10. Receiving Reservoir
11. Livelihoods
12. Geology
13. Reservoir Keepers
14. Downtown Connections
15. Andrew Willams
16. Gardens

Introduction

KIOSK Welcome Information

SENECA VILLAGE COMMUNITY

This kiosk marks the center of Seneca Village, a predominantly African-American community that existed from 1825-1857. The village originated when African-Americans began buying property between 82nd and 89th Streets and Seventh and Eighth Avenues. Among the earliest purchasers was an important African-American church, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, which initially acquired land for a burial ground. Members of the church purchased additional property and began to buil houses. More African-Americans joined the community in the 1830s, and in the following decade Irish immigrants also began to settle in the village. In the 1850s, the city used eminent domain to acquire the land as part of Central Park; by 1857, residents were required to leave and all structures were razed.

Researchers believe that African-Americans may have begun to settle in the area to create an autonomous community far from downtown. Although New York State abolished slavery in 1827, African-Americans still faced discrimination and threats of violence, among other grave obstacles to freedom and citizenship. Some established their own institutions--schools, churches, newspapers, and aid organizations—as well as separate neighborhoods where they could build community. In a sparsely-settled area, about three miles from the developed part of Manhattan, Seneca Village was a refuge from both the racist climate and the overcrowded and unhealthy conditions of the rapidly growing city.

Seneca Village was the most densely settled part of the 776 acres slated for Central Park, land that was home to approximately 1,600 people. By 1855, roughly 225 individuals lived in Seneca Village, which consisted of fifty-two houses, three churches, at least one school, and several burial grounds. Roughly two-thirds of Seneca Village residents were African-American, about half of whom owned their homes.

The Significance of Seneca Village

The high rate of property ownership in Seneca Village made it an exceptional community for 19th-century New York. For African-Americans, buying property was not only a source of economic security, it was also a path to suffrage.

Beginning in 1821, New York State required African-American men to own at least $250 worth of property in order to vote, while European-American men were eligible to vote without having to own property. Some African-Americans owned property in Seneca Village but did not actually live there, instead renting out their land or holding it as an investment.

That many residents owned their homes and lived in the village for a long time defies the typical 19th-century depiction of the community as a shantytown inhabited by destitute squatters. Park advocates and journalists chronicling the construction of the park often presented Seneca Village—along with other settlements and residents in the area—in very disparaging terms, highlighting contemporary racist attitudes towards African-Americans and disdain for the poor.

Seneca Village was far from a shantytown - while some residents were poor and did live in buildings described as shanties, most lived in two-story homes.

Also in defiance of stereotypes, most African-American residents were gainfully employed, typically as unskilled laborers or service workers. Among the occupations listed in the census records are cook, waiter, domestic, sailor, cooper, grocer, preacher, and cartman. Records also indicate that many children living in the village attended school, suggesting that families prioritized education. All of these factors have led researchers to understand Seneca Village as a predominantly middle-class community, one that was more stable and prosperous than other African-American enclaves in the city at the time.

Seneca Village's three churches were another marker of a stable community, anchoring not only religious but also political and social life for African-Americans. African Union Church (built around 1840) and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (built 1853) were both satellite locations for churches based downtown. All Angels' Church (built 1849) was established as a mission by St. Michael's Episcopal Church, a congregation on the Upper West Side, and was attended by both European-Americans and African-Americans.

This map of Seneca Village, prepared by engineer Egbert Viele in 1855 as part of the survey of the land slated for Central Park, shows the cluster of houses, churches, and gardens that made up the community.

What Happened to Seneca Village?

When the city began planning for Central Park it acquired land through eminent domain - the right of governments to take private land for public use. Those who owned property were compensated for its value and residents were required to leave, a long process that ended in the fall of 1857. The construction of Central Park began in 1858 with the clearing of the land, including the demolition of buildings and removal of those interred in the burial grounds. Records show that some burials were relocated to a cemetery in Queens. Residents dispersed to other parts of the city and elsewhere. By the time this section of Central Park was completed in the early 1860s, no clear traces of Seneca Village remained.

Some residents protested the city's acquisition of land through right of eminent domain, while others wrote letters asserting that their property was undervalued.

In this affidavit, Seneca Village resident Andrew Williams states that the , value of his property, which consisted of three lots, was worth $4,000—almost double the amount of $2,335 offered by the city.

Timeline

1815 Surveyor John Randel completes maps documenting farmland in upper Manhattan. The area in the West 80s is largely undeveloped.

1817 NY State passes the Gradual Emancipation law: enslaved African-Americans born before July 4, 1799 will become free on July 4, 1827

1821 NY State requires that African-American men, in order to vote, must own property valued at $250 or more.

1824 John and Elizabeth Whitehead purchase farmland in the West 80s.

1825 African-Americans purchase land from the Whiteheads. African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church purchases land for a cemetery.

1825 NY State requires that African-American men, in order to vote, must own property valued at $250 or more.

1827 Abolition of slavery in NY State on July 4. First African-American newspaper, *Freedom's Journal*, published in New York City.

1830 86th Street and 8th Avenue are in use through the area.

1832 Cholera outbreak in NYC. 3,500 die; 80,000 flee.

1833 St. Michael's Church establishes Sunday School in Seneca Village.

1834 Anti-abolitionist riots in NYC destroy numerous homes and businesses of abolitionists and African-American leaders.

1836 Maps show approximately 12 buildings in the village.

1838 Planning begins for the Croton Aqueduct, NYC's first water supply system.

1840 First record of Irish immigrants settling in the area. African Union Church and School built.

1842 Construction of receiving reservoir for Croton Aqueduct largely complete. Located just east of Seneca Village.

1845 Potato famine in Ireland leads to huge wave of Irish immigration.

1849 St. Michael's builds All Angels' Church.

1850 Total population of NYC approximately 550,500 of which 6% are African-American. Fugitive Slave Act enables law enforcement to arrest suspected runaway slaves and denies them right to jury trial.

1853 African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church lays cornerstone for a new church.

1853 NY State sets aside over 750 acres of land in Manhattan to create Central Park, the country's first major public park.

1855 Land for the park surveyed, documenting 52 homes and approximately 225 residents in the village.

1857 All residents forced to leave. Most buildings are removed.

1857 In Dred Scott decision Supreme Court rules that African-Americans are not and cannot be citizens.

1858 Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux win the design competition for Central Park. First section of the park opens to the public.

1861 The Civil War begins.

Map: Egbert Viele, *Map of the lands included in the Central Park*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Affidavit:** Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives.

SENECA VILLAGE LANDSCAPE

Historical accounts portrayed those living in Seneca Village and the entire area slated for Central Park in derogatory terms. They also disparaged the landscape, emphasizing it as rocky, swampy, and diseased. Park promoters presented the site as a wasteland to justify taking so much land for a recreational purpose, and to emphasize the creation of the park as an extraordinary transformation. Closer study reveals that sections of the landscape were indeed swampy and rocky, but its acreage also contained small gardens, woodlands, and hills that some characterized as beautiful and productive.

Uncovering the history of Seneca Village has involved a closer examination of the landscape and its natural and built features. Researchers have tried to imagine how residents lived on the land and also discern what still remains of the mid-19th-century pre-park landscape. This process has illuminated Seneca Village as a place shaped by the actions and agency of residents as well as by the forces of urban growth and change.

Seneca Village and Urban Growth

When the first African-Americans began buying property in the area in 1825, the northern border of the city was around 23rd Street; by the time Seneca Village residents were forced to leave in 1857, the city was built-up as far north as 50th Street. During this period the city's population increased almost sevenfold. Seneca Village was originally a remote settlement that researchers believe was viewed by its residents as a refuge from the crowded conditions and racist climate of Lower Manhattan. But even before Seneca Village was displaced, it became less remote. It was gradually encroached upon by forces of urbanization, forces that did not make much accommodation for African-Americans or the poor.

Signs of the city's relentless expansion and march northward were apparent in Seneca Village in its layout according to the grid plan and manifested over time through the construction of new streets such as Eighth Avenue and 86th Street, both in use by 1830. The reservoir was another prominent sign of urban growth. Completed in 1842, this huge structure was built to hold the city's water supply and became a boundary on the east side of the village. Just before the park was initiated, the village was forced to adjust to another urban pressure. In 1851, when the city outlawed burials below 86th Street and prohibited the establishment of any new burial grounds in Manhattan, the village's churches had to acquire space in the newly-developed rural cemeteries in Queens.

This detail from a bird's-eye view of Manhattan from 1851 captures the city's expansion north, including the receiving reservoir adjacent to Seneca Village, the distributing reservoir at 42nd Street, and the railroad along what was then Fourth Avenue. It also depicts what researchers believe is Seneca Village, represented by a church and a few houses.

Seneca Village and Central Park

The dramatic urban growth that impacted Seneca Village also spurred the city to create Central Park. City leaders conceived of a large park to counteract the detrimental effects of urban life—overcrowding, disastrous impacts on public health, and lack of open space for recreation. Some park supporters and businessmen also hoped that a park in the sparsely settled section of Manhattan would stimulate real estate development in the surrounding area.

The construction of Central Park seemingly erased all traces of Seneca Village—residents were forced to move, houses were leveled, and the site was graded and landscaped. Even so, the site did not experience the total refashioning that produced iconic landscapes such as the Mall or Sheep Meadow. The presence of the reservoir and the hilly and rocky topography made such radical transformation too challenging. The original design for the site consisted largely of paths and roads and the construction of a new reservoir to the north of the pre-existing one. In the 1930s, the Parks Department added the two playgrounds north and southwest of this sign and filled the original reservoir to create the Great Lawn.

This map from 1864 depicts this area of Central Park soon after the park's completion. The area was defined by various paths and roads, numerous rock outcrops, and the presence of two reservoirs—the old reservoir that existed alongside Seneca Village and the new one built during construction of the park. Compared to other areas of the park, the landscape was altered less dramatically, which may have helped to preserve archaeological remains of Seneca Village.

Natural Features

Although it appears that all traces of Seneca Village were lost when the city built Central Park, some natural features do remain. Most prominent are the numerous rock outcrops throughout the site. The constraints of the geology of the Seneca Village area likely contributed to park designers Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's decision to preserve some of the area's character and existing natural features. These features also contributed to the designers ideal of scenic beauty and the park's purpose as an escape from the city.

The Seneca Village site contains some of the area's most impressive landforms including a massive outcrop now known as Summit Rock, the highest point in the park. This rock, virtually impossible for park builders to remove, is a defining feature of the area and would have been quite prominent in the landscape of Seneca Village. Nearby is a natural spring, called Tanner's Spring, believed to have been a principal water source for the village.

Illustration: John Bornet, Souvenir of New York, 1851. Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division, New York Public Library. **Map:** From *Seventh Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park*, 1864.

SEARCHING FOR SENECA VILLAGE

Since the early 1990s, historians and archaeologists have been working to uncover and reveal the story of Seneca Village. The historians Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar were the first to study Seneca Village in detail and included it in their book *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (1992). Soon after, In 1997, the New-York Historical Society organized an exhibit curated by Grady Turner and Cynthia Copeland, *Before Central Park: The Life and Death of Seneca Village*, which further expanded on this history for the public.

These projects inspired a group of archaeologists and historians to wonder if evidence of Seneca Village still existed in Central Park. Led by Diana Wall and Nan Rothschild, they formed a group called the Seneca Village Project, now called the Institute for the Exploration of Seneca Village History (IESH). After years of planning, research, and preliminary testing, they conducted an excavation In residential areas of the village in the summer of 2011 and uncovered significant remnants. In 2015, the Central Park Conservancy conducted additional research and archaeological testing while planning for reconstruction projects in the two playgrounds in the village area. This work added to the body of knowledge about Seneca Village, specifcally its relationship to the history and landscape of Central Park. The IESVH also advocated for commemoration of Seneca Village and worked with the Parks Department, Conservancy, and Community Board 10 in Harlem to erect the nearby sign that has marked the site since 2001.

We know more about Seneca Village now than ever before, but there is more to learn. Research is ongoing to uncover the history of this exceptional community.

Historical Records

Our understanding of Seneca Village is based on various historical records. When the city began planning Central Park it commissioned maps to document who owned and inhabited the land slated for the park, with details about the types of houses and other structures. Called the "condemnation maps," they were complied in 1855 and used to determine who and how much to pay for each property. In the same year, New York State conducted a census, which can be compared with the maps to better understand who lived in the various houses in the village. The census Includes information about race, profession, age place of birth, and relationships among household members.

There is also evidence of Seneca Village in federal censuses, church records, tax records, municipal death records, newspaper articles, and documents related to the creation of Central Park. No photographs of the village have been found.

Archaeology

Archaeological Investigations offer now Insight into Seneca Village and provide a tangible connection to its residents. The excavations of 201 involved eight weeks of work in the park, during which archaeologists and students collected several thousand artifacts and other cultural materials such as bone and shell. Many artifacts reflect the residents" domestic life—dishes, drinking glasses, tobacco pipes, medicine bottles, buttons, combs, pencils, sewing tools, and shoos: others such as bricks and stones were related to the construction of their homes. Analysis of those materials supports the understanding that Seneca Village was not a community of poor squatters, as it was often portrayed, but a relatively stable and predominantly middle-class community.

Central Park is a protected historic landscape: it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated as a Now York Scenic Landmark. Al work in the area is planned with consideration of the site's exceptional history and its potential for additional archaeological remains.

Selected artifacts discovered in 2011: molded ironstone plate, tobacco pipe bowl, glass medicine or perfume bottle, and jaw bone from a domesticated mammal (possibly a sheep or goat).

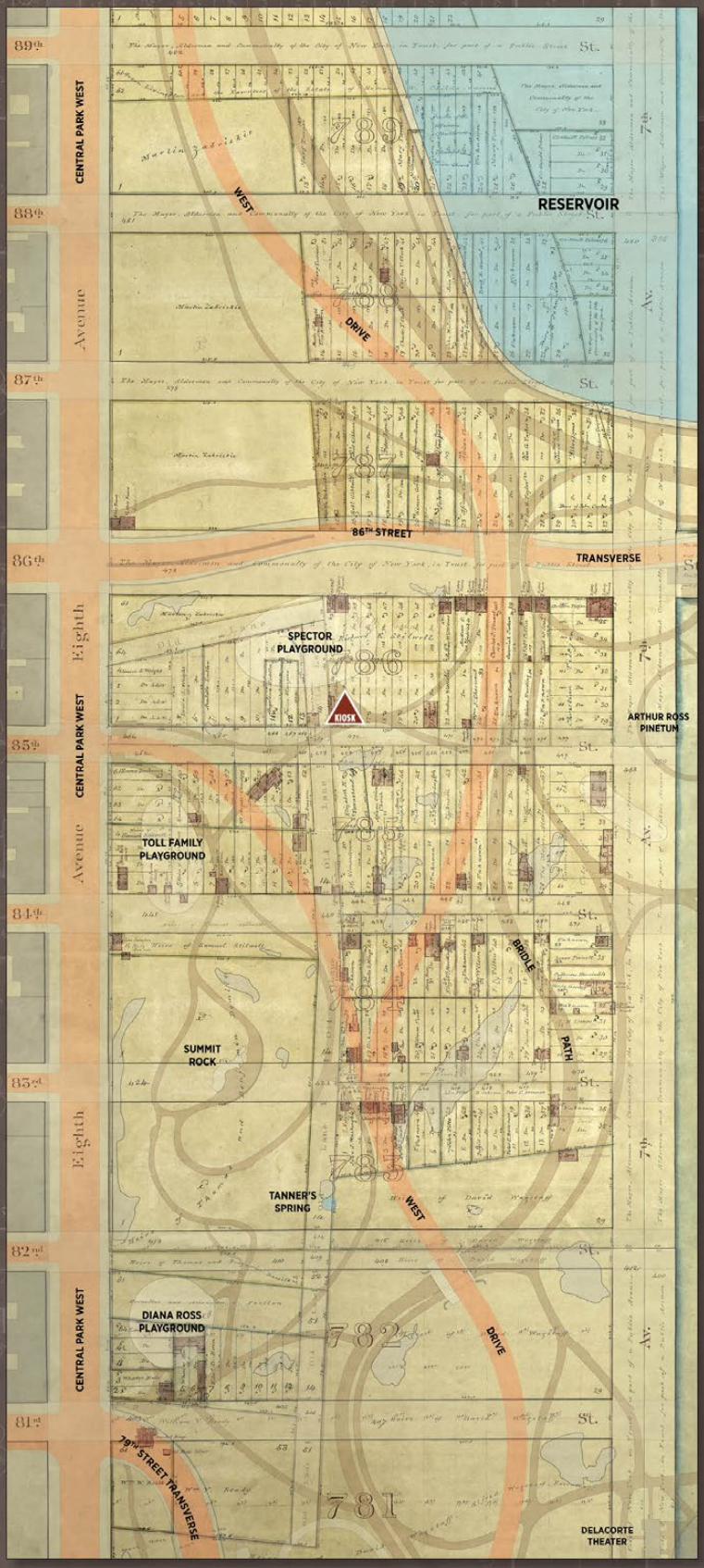
Students assist with the excavation in Seneca Village in 2011.

The Name "Seneca Village"

The exact origin of the name "Seneca Village" is unknown. It was recorded by Thomas McClure Peters, an assistant priest and later rector of St. Michael's Episcopal Church, who started a mission to serve the poor in the community; he later established Al Angels Church, In a book documenting the history of the church. Peters uses the name "Seneca Village" to describe "a miserable settlement of low whites and colored people" in the "wastelands" that became Central Park, a depiction that perhaps served to justly the church's missionary work. Considering his derogatory characterization, one theory is that the name refers to the Native American Seneca people and was intended as a slur.

If the name "Seneca Village originated in the African-American community. It could have been chosen for uplifting associations. One theory is that it was intended to evoke Seneca Fails in upstate New York and the abolitionist movement there. Another is that the settlement was named after the Roman philosopher Luaus Annaeus Seneca because some African-American activists were known to have been Inspired by his anti-slavery book, *Morals*.

Several 19th-century sources refer to the community as a part of Yorkville, the village that developed in the early 19th century further east and expanded in the 1890s following the construction of the New York and Harlem Railroad. The reservoir adjacent to Seneca Village was identified as located in Yorkville.



This image shows a portion of the Central Park condemnation maps compiled in 1855, overlaid with a current map of the park. The condemnation maps document all the buildings in Seneca Village as well as who lived there and who owned the land about a year before residents were forced to leave.

Photographs: Courtesy of Institute for the Exploration of Seneca Village History. **Map:** Overlay of modern Central Park on Seneca Village as shown on the condemnation maps of 1856, produced by Hunter Research, Inc. for the Central Park Conservancy. Gardner A. Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Maps*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives.

Seneca Village Community

AME ZION CHURCH

Near this sign was the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion), built in 1853. It was one of three churches in the center of Seneca Village. Although AME Zion was the last church to construct a building in the village, it had a much longer affiliation with the community. The church was one of the earliest purchasers of land here, initially for a burial ground.

The AME Zion's involvement in Seneca Village demonstrates how this remote settlement had highlight significant connections to the African-American community living downtown. AME Zion was New York City's first African-American church, founded around 1796 by African-American members of the John Street Methodist Church who wanted to form an independent congregation. They met in a rented hall until 1800, when they established their first "mother" church on Leonard Street. The congregation grew rapidly and established satellite churches not only in Seneca Village but in other eastern cities and towns. In the early 20th century, the mother church moved uptown to Harlem, where it still holds services today.

LAYING OF A CORNER-STONE.—The corner-stone of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church of Yorkville, was laid yesterday afternoon. It is situated in Eighty-fifth st., between Seventh and Eighth-avs. The sermon on the occasion was preached by Rev. Christopher Rush, Superintendent of the African Churches, who also laid the corner-stone. His text was a part of the 6th verse of the first chapter of the First Epistle of Peter. The box which was deposited in the corner-stone contained a copy of the Bible, a copy of the Hymn-book of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in America, a copy of the Discipline of the same Church, a letter with the names of the five trustees of this Church, and a copy of *The Tribune* and one of *The Sun*. The building will be 22x40 in size, will be built of wood, and painted white. The basement of it will be a school-room for the education of colored children. Toward fifty colored families reside in the neighborhood of this Church. There are thirty members in this Society, and the congregation usually numbers about 100 persons. Circuit preachers of the African Methodist Church, will supply the pulpit.

This article from 1853 in the *New-York Daily Tribune* announces the laying of the cornerstone for the new AME Zion Church in Seneca Village. The coverage of this event in a major newspaper reflected the prominence of this religious institution in the African-American community and in the city.

The first AME Zion Church, shown on this map from 1852, was located at Church Street and Leonard Street in the city's Fifth Ward (present-day Tribeca), near where the city's African-American population was concentrated.

By the time AME Zion constructed their church in Seneca Village, the congregation had grown considerably. They had rebuilt their original church and constructed two other churches located in Manhattan, including one in Harlem, and numerous others throughout the east coast. Around 1864, the mother church had outgrown its second building on Church Street and was using the large building shown here, located in what is now the West Village.

Newspaper: *New-York Daily Tribune*, "Laying of a Corner-Stone," August 5, 1853. **Map**: Matthew Dripps, *City of New York Extending Northward to Fiftieth Street*, 1852. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection.
Illustration: *AME Zion Church, corner of West Tenth and Bleeker Street*, ca. 1867. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

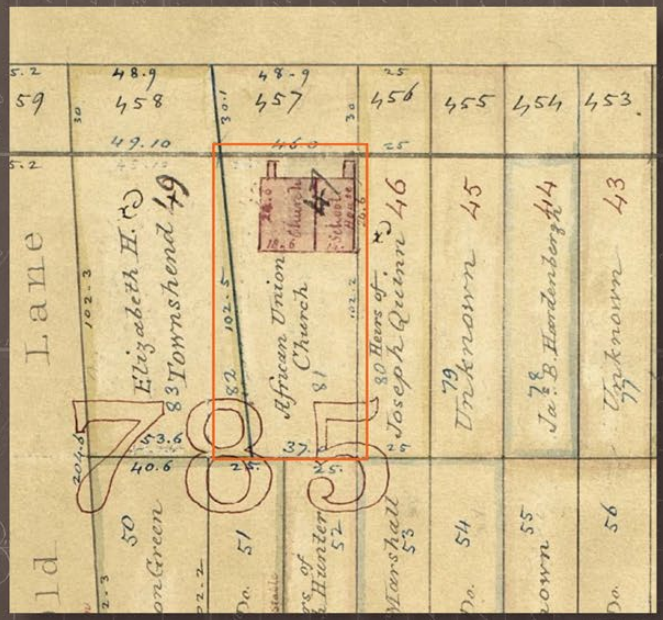
Seneca Village Community

AFRICAN UNION CHURCH

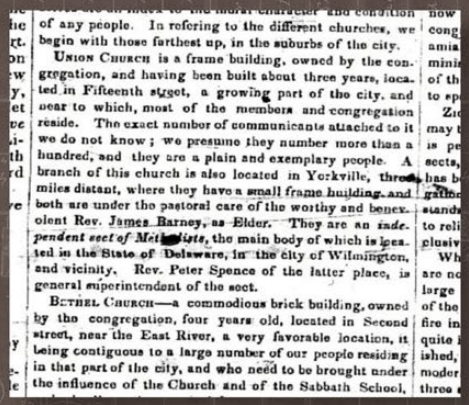
Near this location stood the first church in Seneca Village: African Union, a Methodist church built around 1840. The original congregation formed in and around Wilmington, Delaware, and its leaders built their first church in Manhattan around 1836, on 15th Street near Sixth Avenue. Their second church, in Seneca Village, appears to have been a satellite location to serve the growing African-American population there. The small churchyard was used as a burial ground. William Mathews, a man from Delaware who lived in Seneca Village, worked as the sexton, looking after the church and churchyard.

Next to the church was a small primary school, Colored School No. 3. According to census records, a higher percentage of African-American families in Seneca Village sent their children to school than the rest of the city. Although little is known about this church and school, they represent the important role of independent African-American institutions in establishing Seneca Village as an autonomous community.

The school in Seneca Village was a city school with roots in the abolitionist movement. This engraving depicts the African Free School No. 2 located on Mulberry Street, one of several schools created beginning in the late 1700s by the New York Manumission Society. This anti-slavery organization led by influential white New Yorkers provided education to the children of slaves and free African-Americans. In the 1830s, these schools became part of the city's public school system.



This map shows the African Union Church and Colored School No. 3 as small buildings located on an irregularly-sized lot. They are highly significant as the first institutions in Seneca Village.



of any people. In refering to the different churches, we begin with those farthest up, in the suburbs of the city.

UNION CHURCH is a frame building, owned by the congregation, and having been built about three years, located in Fifteenth street, a growing part of the city, and near to which, most of the members and congregation reside. The exact number of communicants attached to it we do not know; we presume they number more than a hundred, and they are a plain and exemplary people. A branch of this church is also located in Yorkville, three miles distant, where they have a small frame building, and both are under the pastoral care of the worthy and benevolent Rev. James Barney, as Elder. They are an *independent sect of Methodists*, the main body of which is located in the State of Delaware, in the city of Wilmington, and vicinity. Rev. Peter Spence of the latter place, is general superintendent of the sect.

BETHEL CHURCH—a commodious brick building, owned by the congregation, four years old, located in Second street, near the East River, a very favorable location, it being contiguous to a large number of our people residing in that part of the city, and who need to be brought under the influence of the Church and of the Sabbath School,

This reference to African Union Church in Seneca Village was found in an article about African-American churches in New York City, published in a noted newspaper called *The Colored American* in 1840.

Map: Gardener Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Map*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Newspaper:** *The Colored American*, "The Colored Churches in this City," March 28, 1840, page 2. Courtesy of Accessible Archives Inc.® **Illustration:** From Charles C. Andrews, *The History of the New-York African Free-Schools*, 1830.

Seneca Village Community

THE WILSON HOUSE

Near this sign and adjacent to All Angels' Church was the home of William G. Wilson, who lived there in 1855 with his wife, Charlotte, and eight children. Wilson worked as a porter and was also a sexton for the church, responsible for maintaining the building and yard. Archaeological investigations conducted at the site of the Wilson house in 2011 uncovered numerous artifacts, remnants of both domestic objects and architectural features. These artifacts allows researchers to imagine the lives of the Wilsons, and contribute to the understanding of Seneca Village as largely middle-class community.

A large number of artifacts were discovered at the Wilson house site in part because of how it was demolished. Those clearing the land for the park removed all the above ground structures, often recycling the wood. In the case of the Wilson house, they appear to have collapsed the rest of the building, including the chimney and roofing material, and covered it with soil. In the process, abandoned or broken objects and object fragments were buried underground.

This photograph shows the brick rubble believed to be part of the chimney of the Wilson house. These and other architectural materials allow us to better picture this well-built house. We now know the house had a stone foundation, wooden floors, glass windows, a brick chimney, and a metal roof.

Photographs: Courtesy of Institute for the Exploration of Seneca Village History.

In 2011, archeologists conducted excavations on the site of the Wilson house, a three-story house whose approximate footprint, 21 x 20 feet, is shown here outlined with bricks.

Some of the artifacts discovered during excavation of the Wilson house suggest that the family was able to purchase more than the bare necessities and were concerned with appearances.

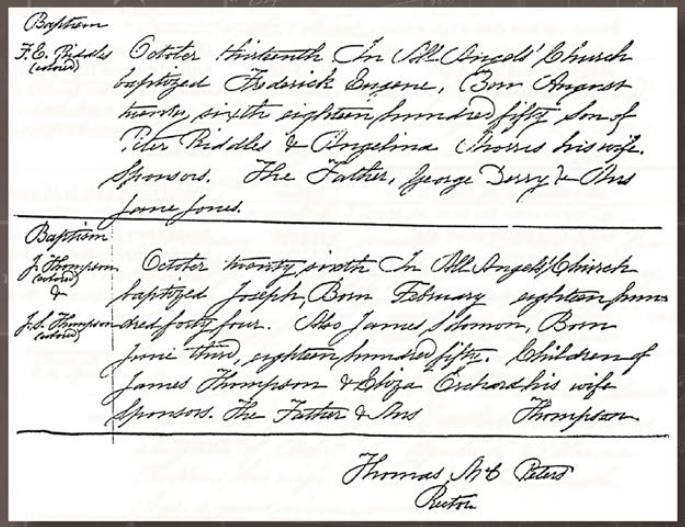
Clockwise from top left: fragment of glass candlestick or lamp; stoneware jar lid; bone toothbrush handle; fragment of Chinese porcelain.

Seneca Village Community

ALL ANGELS' CHURCH

Those aware of Seneca Village have speculated as to whether the stones visible in the lawn just beyond this sign are the remains of a building foundation from the village. In fact, they are remnants of a sandbox that was installed in the 1930s. Coincidentally, they mark the approximate location of All Angels' Church, one of the three churches in the heart of Seneca Village.

Unlike the other Seneca Village churches, which were branches of African-American churches located in downtown Manhattan, All Angels' was created as a result of missionary efforts by a local church. St. Michaels, an Episcopal church located at Amsterdam Avenue and 99th Street, first established a Sunday School in the area in 1833 and in 1849 built the church to serve the community. Both African-Americans and European immigrants attended services and were baptized, married, and buried by the church.



Baptism

F. E. Riddle (colored) October thirteenth In All Angels' Church baptized Frederick Eugene, Born August twenty sixth eighteen hundred fifty Son of Peter Riddle & Angelina Thomas his wife. Sponsors. The Father, George Berry & Ann Jane Jones.

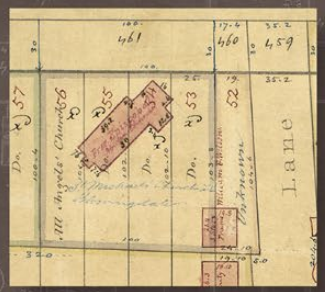
Baptism

J. Thompson (colored) October twenty ninth In All Angels' Church baptized Joseph, Born February eighteen hundred forty four. Also James Thomson, Born June third, eighteen hundred fifty. Children of James Thompson & Eliza Orchard his wife Sponsors. The Father & Ann Thompson

Thomas St. C. Peters Rector

All Angels' recorded all baptisms, marriages, and burials. These baptisms of children indicated as "colored" took place in 1850. Frederick Riddles, top, lived in Seneca Village; we do not know if the Thomson children, bottom, lived in the village.

When the city built Central Park, church leaders moved the building from Seneca Village to 11th Avenue between 80th and 81st Streets. Pictured here is All Angels' Church in its second location. This is the only known photograph of a building that existed in Seneca Village.



All Angels' Church was the largest of the three churches in Seneca Village. Unlike the other buildings in the village that were aligned with the street grid, this church was oriented closer to true east-west, perhaps for religious reasons or because its site was constrained by the underlying bedrock.

Photograph and record: Courtesy of All Angels' Church. Map: Gardener Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Map*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives.

Seneca Village Community

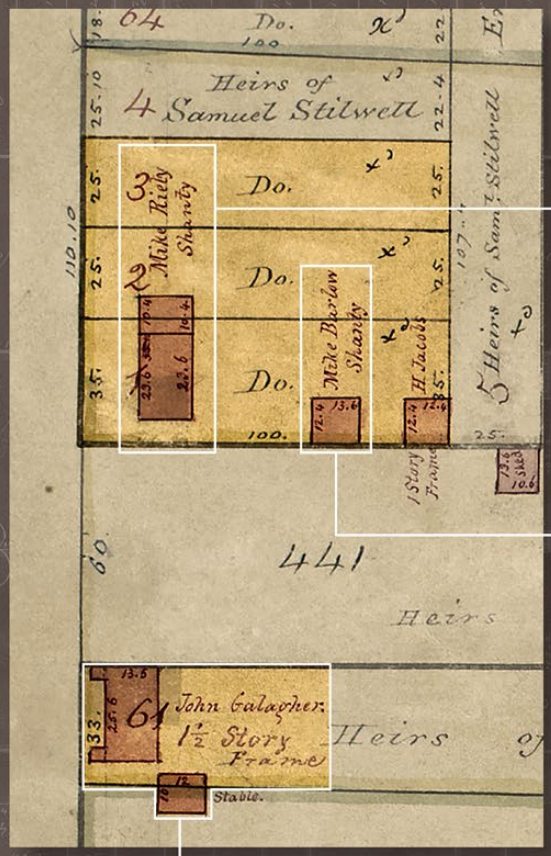
IRISH AMERICANS

Irish-American families were scattered throughout Seneca Village, accounting for roughly one third of the population during the 1850s. In the vicinity of this sign, the western side of the village, was a cluster of at least three Irish-American households headed by John Gallagher, Mike Barlow, and Jane Allen. Gallagher and his family occupied a one-and-a-half-story frame house with a stable nearby, while Mike Barlow and his wife lived in a much smaller shanty. Jane Allen and her daughter are thought to have lived in another shanty owned by Mike Riely.

Irish immigrants began to settle in Seneca Village beginning in the 1840s. They most likely came to the United States as part of a wave of immigration that began in the 1820s and peaked during the late 1840s in response to the Irish Potato Famine. Many rural Irish families, fleeing desperate living conditions in their homeland, poured into the major port cities of the eastern United States. Over a million refugees left Ireland for North America during this period, with approximately three-quarters of them entering through New York City. Irish immigrants lived in other parts of the future park site, including a smaller settlement further south between 68th and 72nd Streets, which one newspaper called "Pigtown."

Dwellings numbered in the order of visitation	Of what material built.	Value.	Families numbered in the order of their visitation.	Name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June was in this family.	Age.	Sex.	Whether Black, or Mulatto.	Relation to the head of the family.	In what county of this State, or in what other State or Foreign Country born.	Married.	Widowed.	Years resident in this city or town.	Profession, Trade, or Occupation.	VOTERS. Native.	VOTERS. Naturalized.	VOTERS. Aliens.	Persons over 21 years of age, unable to read and write.	Owners of land.	Deaf, Dumb, Blind, Insane, or Idiotic.
19	Frame	700	379	John Gallagher	37	M			Ireland	1		12	Shoemaker	-	1	-	-	-	
				Ann Gallagher	32	F		Wife	Ireland	1		15		-	-	1	-	-	
				Eliza Gallagher	11	F		Child	New York	-	-	10		-	-	-	-	-	
				Edward Gallagher	6	M		Child	New York			6		-	-	-	-	-	
				Patrick Donahue	72	M		Father in law	Ireland	1		11	None	-	1	-	1	-	

Census records reveal that John Gallagher was a naturalized citizen and suggest that his family were the first Irish immigrants to settle in Seneca Village. John and his wife, Ann, emigrated to the United States prior to 1840 and their children were born in New York.



Although Mike Riely's name is on this map, researchers believe that Jane Allen actually lived in this shanty, perhaps renting from Riely. Allen, 46, lived with her 18-year-old daughter Ann. Both came to the United States around 1850. Nothing is known about Riely. He does not appear in any of the census records and this absence is a reminder that the historical record is often confusing and unrevealing.

Mike Barlow, a laborer, and his wife, Ann, occupied a shanty barely 170 square feet in plan, which was quite small by today's standards but comparable in size to other houses in Seneca Village. They came to the United States around 1847 and 1851, respectively. It is unclear if they owned or rented this house.

John Gallagher owned a more substantial house than some of the others in the immediate vicinity. He lived with his wife, Ann, and their young children, Eliza and Edward. Ann's father, Patrick Donahue, lived with the family. John made his living way as a shoemaker, perhaps working from his home and servicing his neighbors and passers-by on Eighth Avenue.

Map: Gardner Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Maps*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Census:** New York State Census, *Population Census of the 22nd Ward*, 1855.

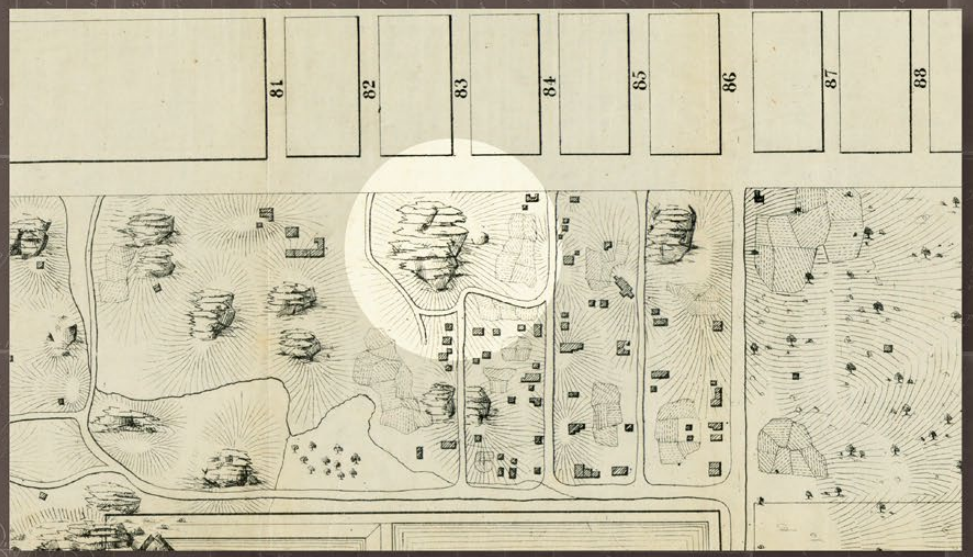
Seneca Village Landscape

SUMMIT ROCK

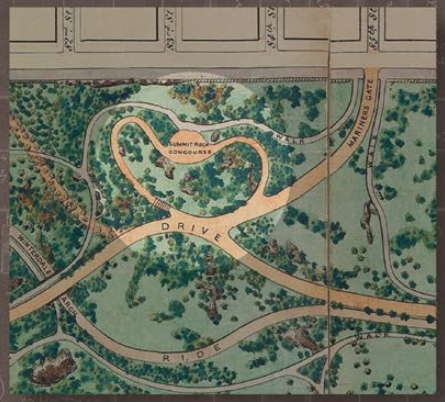
At 142 feet above sea level, this hill is the highest elevation in Central Park and was a prominent feature of the Seneca Village landscape. The hill is actually a massive bedrock outcrop. Just below, on Central Park West, you can see a cross-section of this enormous rock, which was blasted to create the avenue. The rough and steep terrain made it a difficult place to build, and maps show that no one lived here.

The rock offered extensive views in all directions. From the top, village residents could take in the surrounding landscape: to the north and northeast was their community, and to the west was the Hudson River and the hills of New Jersey beyond. The rock provided a sense of prospect: it was a place to take in the village as a whole and perhaps also spot approaching visitors.

This image does not depict Seneca Village, but the view from Summit Rock looking west towards the Hudson River. It does provide a sense of the character of the surrounding area and the rocky terrain. Looking west today, you can still see the river and the hills of New Jersey.



A survey of the park site from 1856 depicts Summit Rock as a prominent feature in the landscape with Seneca Village sprawling below to the north and east.



Central Park's designers preserved the rock and its perspective on the surrounding landscape. They designed a scenic overlook at the top, with a concourse as a resting place for carriages.

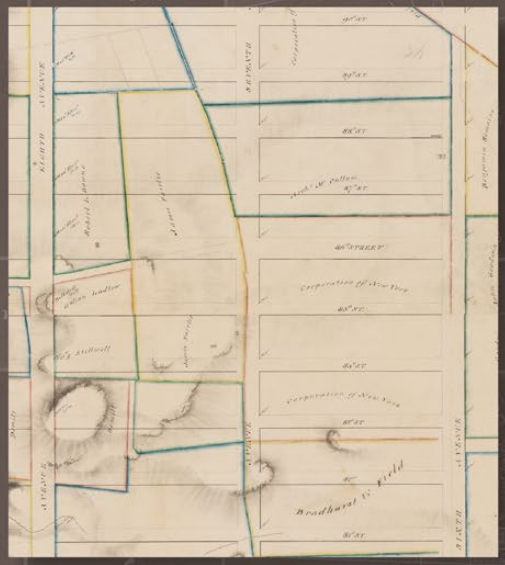
Map (top): Egbert Viele, *Map of the lands included in the Central Park*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Map (bottom):** John Bogart, *Map of the Central Park, 1872*, Department of Public Parks, Museum of the City of New York .38.474. **Illustration:** From *First Annual Report on the Improvement of the Central Park*, 1857.

Seneca Village Landscape

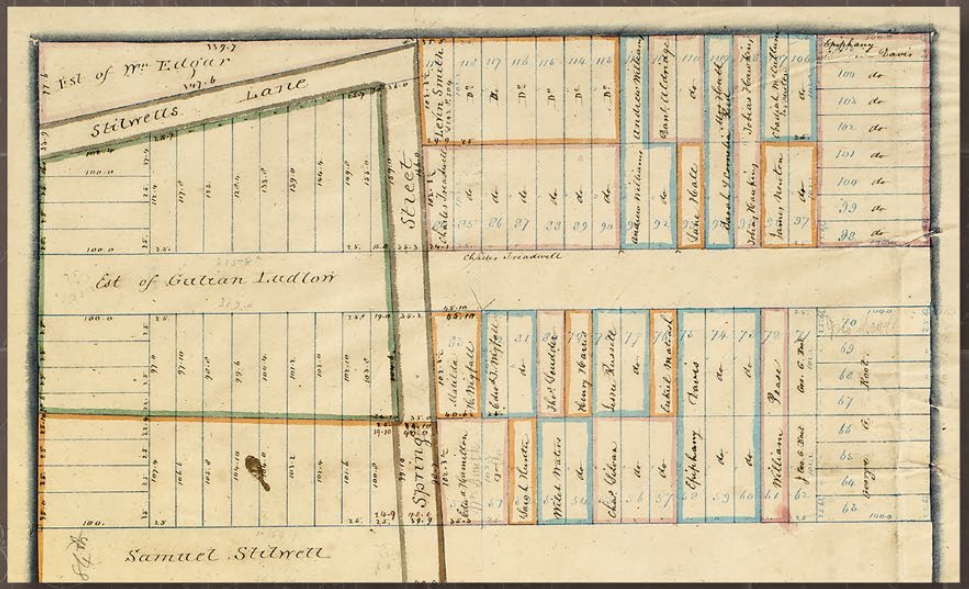
LANES, LOTS, AND STREETS

The path on which you are standing roughly follows part of the main street through Seneca Village. A map from 1838 identifies it as "Spring Street" because it led to a natural spring just south of here, likely the primary water source for the village. A later map, from 1856, calls the same street "Old Lane," possibly to distinguish it from the grid of new streets and avenues that the city was still constructing based on the Commissioners' Plan of 1811.

Although the street grid was represented on maps of Seneca Village, it had not been fully implemented on the ground this far north. By 1856, only 86th Street and Eighth Avenue were open. The street grid did impact the layout and development of the settlement, determining uniform building lots and property lines, which guided the location of buildings.



This map created around 1820 shows the street grid laid out over the existing landscape of farms in the area that would become Seneca Village. To mark the future streets, surveyors placed a marble marker or "monument" at the southwest corner of each block; where a corner coincided with exposed bedrock, they drilled a hole and set an iron bolt instead.



This circa 1838 map shows how the grid plan impacted the development of Seneca Village. Although most of the streets were not yet built, they seem to have been laid out informally. Stilwells Lane and Spring Street stand out as remnants of older settlement patterns.

In 2014, archeologists documented this surviving survey marker in Central Park, installed to mark the future intersection of 103rd Street and Sixth Avenue. These markers protruded from the ground about one foot and were inscribed with the relevant street and avenue numerals on two sides. They were very likely a presence in the Seneca Village landscape, a sign of potential urban development and change.

Map (right): Gardner Sage, *Manhattan Square Benefit Map*, 1836. Courtesy of New-York Historical Society. **Photograph:** Courtesy of Hunter Research. **Map (left):** John Randel, *Farm Map*, 1818-1820. Courtesy of Manhattan Borough President's Office.

Seneca Village Community

HOUSING

In 1855, Seneca Village was comprised of 52 dwellings concentrated in the area between 82nd and 86th Streets. On a lot near this sign stood two homes—a two-story house and a shanty—illustrating the diversity of housing types in the village.

While many contemporary accounts depicted Seneca Village as a shantytown comprised of small and poorly constructed buildings, and inhabited by squatters, it had a range of building types and residents either rented or owned their homes. Most residents lived not in shanties, but in one-, two-, or three-story wooden houses. Archaeological excavations revealed that at least some of these houses had substantial stone foundations and metal roofing, indicating that they were well-built.

Many of the dwellings were quite small by today's standards and residents lived in crowded conditions—sometimes two families in one house. But they had more space than had they lived downtown, as well as access to outdoor space. Many properties had sheds, and several had stables and/or barns.

The two African-American families living on this plot were close neighbors, both renting from Lucy Celia Wallace. Salmon Hutchins, a laborer, lived in the two-story house with his wife and five children. Although it was much smaller, the shanty also had seven residents: John White, a sailor, and his wife and five children.

Although this photograph does not depict a house in Seneca Village, but one further south, it does give us a sense of what a two-story house in the village may have looked like. This house appears to have an attached shed, a stove-pipe chimney, and a paned window.

This photograph depicts a cluster of buildings, considered shanties, adjacent to Central Park in the 1880s. These were simple wood structures, typically with one room and built without basements or fireplaces. Ten Seneca Village families lived in buildings comparable to these.

Map: Gardner Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Maps*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Photograph (right):** *View of squatters on 94th Street with Central Park in the background*, 1888. Courtesy of New-York Historical Society. **Photograph (left):** Olmsted and Vaux, *Detail of View No. 5 from Point E, Greensward Plan*, 1858. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives.

Seneca Village Landscape

TANNER'S SPRING

Through these trees in a small clearing is a pool of water fed by a natural spring. This was likely a water source for Seneca Village. Access to fresh water would have been essential to the health and prosperity of the community. The city's receiving reservoir, completed in 1842, stood approximately 700 feet away from this spring but did not supply water for local residents. Water from the reservoir was piped south to the distributing reservoir at 42nd Street, and from there piped into homes, businesses, and other facilities.

This spring is one of several still preserved in Central Park. During the late 19th century, some of the park's remaining natural springs became attractions because they offered visitors a taste of fresh water in the midst of a rapidly growing metropolis. This spring was named for Dr. Henry S. Tanner, who became famous during the 1880s by fasting for 40 days, drinking only water from springs in Central Park.

This photo shows what the spring location looked like in 1901. It was published in a book documenting various natural springs still in Central Park and others remaining throughout the city.

The location of Tanner's Spring is identifiable on this map well-known map from 1865. It shows the original streams and watercourses on Manhattan island, overlaid by the street grid and park. The spring fed into a drainage system that ultimately connected all the way to the East River.

Archaeological investigations in 2011 uncovered evidence of many vessels, including some that were used to transport, serve, and store water. This image shows the handle of a pitcher and was discovered during the excavation of the house of Seneca Village resident William Wilson. It was one of several fragments of pitchers and jugs found that were used for serving liquids and for personal washing.

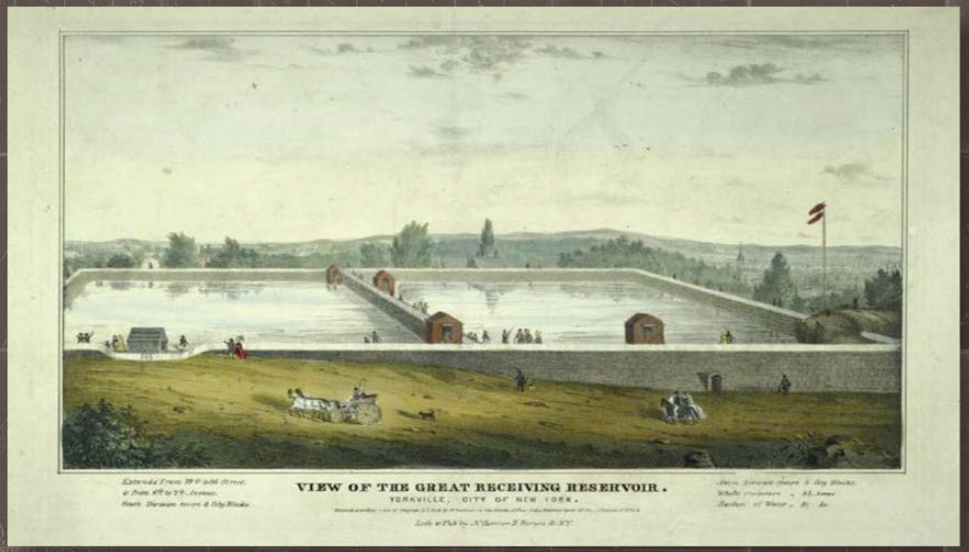
Map: Egbert Viele, *Sanitary & Topographical Map of the City and Island of New York*, 1865. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection. **Photograph (right):** Courtesy of the Institute for the Exploration of Seneca Village History. **Photograph (left):** James Reuel Smith, *Old buried section of 'Dr. Tanner's Well,'* 1901. Courtesy of New-York Historical Society.

Seneca Village Landscape

RECEIVING RESERVOIR

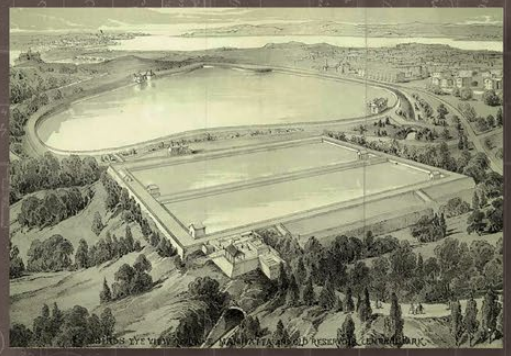
These stone blocks protruding from the ground are remnants of the western wall of the receiving reservoir, a critical component of the original Croton Aqueduct water supply system. Largely completed in 1842, the aqueduct delivered fresh water from Westchester County to the rapidly growing city. Prior to its construction, city residents drew water from wells or received deliveries from private companies. Contamination of the water supply, prior to the building of the aqueduct, caused many devastating disease outbreaks in the early 19th century.

The reservoir was an example of how urban growth disrupted the community of Seneca Village, despite its remote location. The construction involved trenching and installing pipes along 85th Street and then building the 180-million-gallon stone holding tank, which stretched from 79th Street to 86th Street. Its fortress-like walls, 30 feet high in some places, formed a barrier along the east side of the village.



This illustration depicts the receiving reservoir shortly after its completion and shows how it became a tourist attraction. While most of the system was underground, this and other structures served as prominent expressions of an unprecedented feat of engineering and public infrastructure. The houses of Seneca Village would have been in the foreground.

The water held in the receiving reservoir flowed through pipes under Fifth Avenue to the distributing reservoir, shown here in this 1900 photograph. This reservoir was located between 40th and 42nd Streets, on the site of today's New York Public Library. From here the water was piped into homes and hydrants.



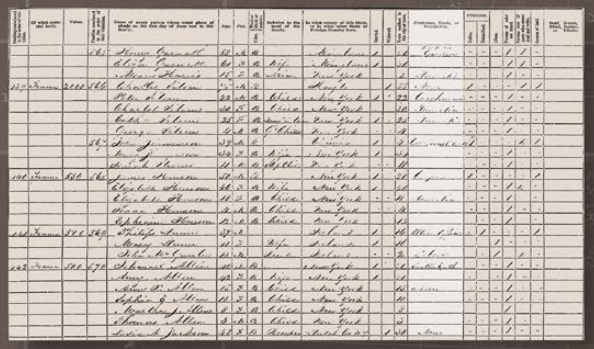
This illustration shows two reservoirs in Central Park: the original receiving reservoir and the second reservoir, constructed in the 1860s in a swampy area to the north. Engineers designed the later reservoir with a curved outline to better harmonize with the design of the park. In the 1930s the city built the Great Lawn on the site of the original reservoir.

Illustration (top): N. Currier, *View of the Great Receiving Reservoir*, 1842. New York Public Library. **Illustration (bottom):** *Birds eye view of Lake Manhatta and old reservoir Central Park*, 1869. Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division, New York Public Library. **Photograph:** *Manhattan: 5th Avenue – 42nd Street*, 1900. Milstein Division, New York Public Library.

Seneca Village Community
LIVELIHOODS

In this area lived several African-American families whose individual occupations give us a further insight into the lives of residents of Seneca Village, as well as the types of jobs available to them. Following emancipation, access to economic and political opportunities for African-Americans remained limited, with most confined to working primarily unskilled and low-paying jobs. Men typically worked as laborers or in service jobs, while women worked as domestics. Census records show that most African-American residents of Seneca Village held these types of jobs. Yet, compared to African-Americans living downtown, they seem to have been better off, and some researchers consider them middle class.

For African-Americans, middle class status was defined less by profession than it was for European-Americans, who associated skilled, non-manual jobs with getting ahead. In Seneca Village, the markers of middle-class status include the fact that almost half of the African-American population owned their homes. It was further defined by education, and census records also show that most African-American men were literate and that most children attended school.



Information about jobs held by Seneca Village residents is found in the New York State census from 1855, providing a window into this particular year. This record shows some of the families living in this area.

Ishmael Allen, 40, lived with his family in a rented shanty and worked as a sexton for a church, someone who maintains a church and churchyard.

After Nancy Moore died in 1854, the Webster family rented her large house. George, 32, worked as porter. His 18-year-old step-daughter, Malvina Hall, was a domestic.

William and Matilda Philips were a young couple, 23 and 19 respectively, who rented a shanty from Elizabeth Harding. William worked as a laborer.

Sarah ("Sally") Wilson, 59, owned her home. The census lists her occupation as "washing," likely meaning that she did laundry for others.

Phillip Dunn, 37, a policeman of Irish descent, lived in a house owned by William Pease, an African-American who also lived in the village and worked as a grocer.

Henry Garnet was a homeowner and longtime resident of Seneca Village. By 1855, he was 88 years old and listed as a gardener.

James Hinson, 50, was a homeowner who worked as a cooper, someone who makes and repairs barrels. He lived with his three children; the oldest, 18-year old Elizabeth, was a domestic.

The Silver family shared this house with another family called the Jimmersons. Charles Silver, the Haitian-born head of the household, worked as a cook; his son Peter, 22, was a coachman, and his wife, Catherine, 25, was a domestic. John Jimmerson was listed as "col'd preacher Methodist" in the census, but it is unclear which church he worked in.

Map: Gardner Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Maps*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Census:** New York State Census, *Population Census of the 22nd Ward*, 1855.

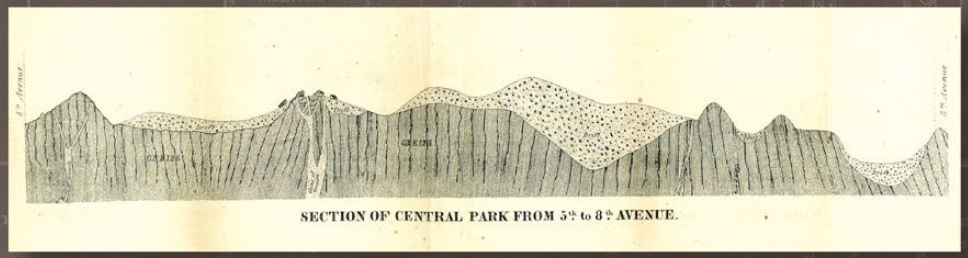
Seneca Village Landscape

GEOLOGY

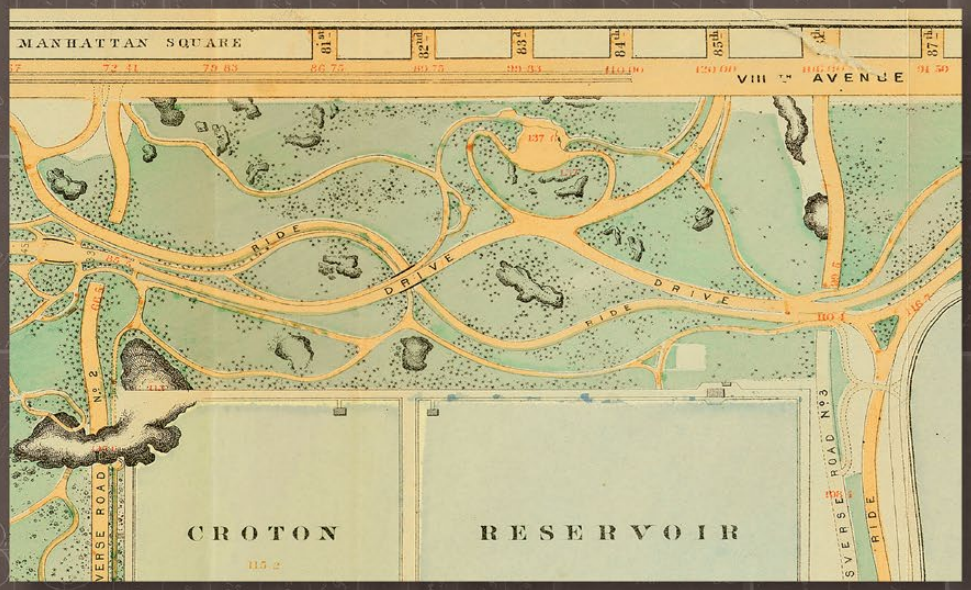
The geology of this area, still visible throughout this section of the park, was a daily part of the lives of Seneca Village residents. Descriptions of the village in the 1850s noted numerous outcrops of Manhattan schist—the island's bedrock, formed around 500 million years ago—including the most massive outcrop in the area, now known as Summit Rock.

We know that this rock was used in the construction of some of the buildings of Seneca Village. Archeological excavations in 2011 and 2016 uncovered foundations made of schist possibly quarried nearby. This same rock contributed to the city's ascendance as a modern metropolis, providing the support for its skyscrapers.

The designers of Central Park preserved many of the existing outcrops, both because they were difficult to remove and because of their scenic beauty. The park is now one of the few places in Manhattan where you can still see the island's ancient foundation.



This cross-section through the north end of Central Park shows how the underlying geology exerts a powerful influence on the park's topography. Gneiss, a generic term for the Manhattan schist, is overlain by sediment and rocks that were deposited by the movement of a glacier.



This map of Central Park from 1864 illustrates how numerous rock outcrops in the area of Seneca Village were integrated into the design of the park. They remain as the most "natural" features in the otherwise completely designed landscape.

During the excavation of the house of Seneca Village resident William G. Wilson, archeologists discovered a portion of the foundation wall, composed mostly of local schist, with some river stones and broken bricks, and held together with mortar.

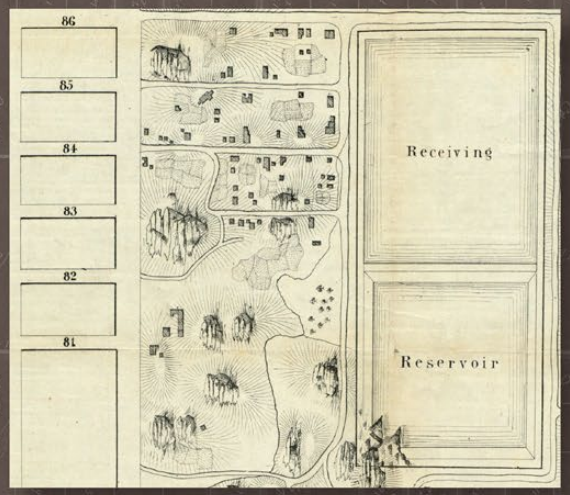
Map: From *Eighth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Central Park*, 1865. **Photograph:** Courtesy of Institute for the Exploration of Seneca Village History.
Illustration: From *First Annual Report on the Improvement of the Central Park*, 1857.

Seneca Village Community

RESERVOIR KEEPERS

In 1842, the city completed construction of one of its most consequential public works projects, the Croton Aqueduct system, which supplied the city with fresh water from upstate New York. This system included a large receiving reservoir directly adjacent to the community of Seneca Village. The north end of the reservoir was 86th Street, near this sign.

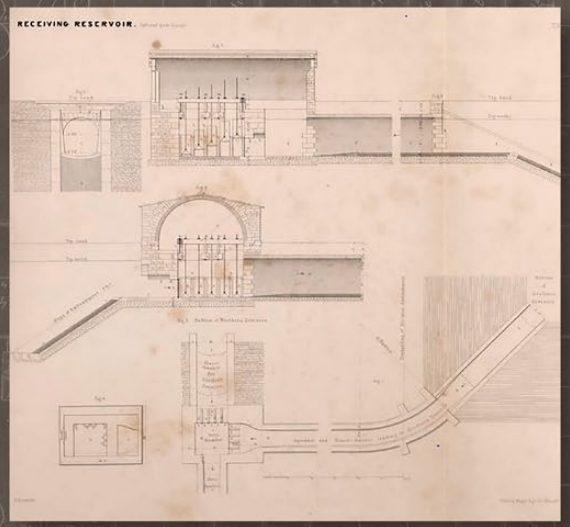
In addition to the physical presence of this massive structure, the reservoir impacted the community in other ways. Two men, John Geary and John Wallace, were employed by the city to take care of the reservoir and lived in Seneca Village with their families. They were part of a group of employees who lived adjacent to important pieces of aqueduct infrastructure in order to maintain it. Both Irish immigrants, Geary and Wallace were also part of the growing Irish-American community who, by 1855, made up approximately one-third of the population of Seneca Village.



This map from 1856 illustrates the dominant presence of the reservoir in Seneca Village. We believe that the reservoir keepers lived adjacent to the reservoir, in the northeast corner of the village, in the vicinity of this sign.

Dwelling numbered in the order of visitation	Of what material built.	Value.	Families entered in the order of visitation	Name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June was in this family.	Age.	Sex.	Color.	Relation to the head of the family.	In what county of this State, or in what other State or Foreign Country born.	Married.	Widowed.	Time resided in this city or town.
1	5	Frame	3500	561	John Geary	62	M			Ireland	1		5
				Catherine Geary	50	F		Wife	New York	1		50
				Mary A. Geary	25	F		Child	New York	-	-	25
				Catherine A. Geary	20	F		Child	New York	-	-	20
				Eleanor Geary	18	F		Child	New York			18
				John Geary Jr	23	M		Child	New York			23
				Eliza Geary	17	F		Child	New York			17
				Eleanor Geary	16	F		Child	New York			16
				Genevieve Geary	15	F		Child	New York			15
				Thomas Geary	12	M		Child	New York			12
				Charlotte Geary	8	F		Child	New York			8
				Daniel J. N. Geary	2	M		Child	New York			2
				Fanny Geary	46	F		Cousin	Ireland			13
				Joseph Devine	8	M		Boarder	New York			8
				Barnaby Devine	8	M		Boarder	New York			8
				Elizabeth Devine	7	F		Boarder	New York			7

Although we are uncertain where exactly reservoir keeper John Geary lived, we do know he had a large family. Census records show that he lived with his wife, ten children, a cousin, and two boarders who were young children.



The gatehouse, depicted in this illustration, was originally located in this general vicinity, near the northwest corner of the reservoir. This important component marked the place where the major inflow pipes entered the reservoir. These pipes were installed along what would have been 85th Street; distinctive manhole covers, labeled "Croton Aqueduct Dept" on the path on the northside of the West 85th Street entrance still mark the presence of this infrastructure.

Map: Egbert Viele, *Map of the lands included in the Central Park*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Drawing:** From T. Schramke, *Description of the New-York Croton Aqueduct in English, German and French*, 1846.
Census: New York State Census, *Population Census of the 22nd Ward*, 1855.

Seneca Village Community

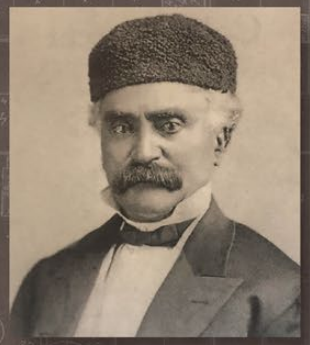
DOWNTOWN CONNECTIONS

Near this sign were four plots owned by Albro Lyons, Peter Guignon, and Rebecca Marshall, Guignon's wife. Related by marriage, the Lyons and the Guignon families were part of a small, tight-knit group of African-Americans who prospered in New York City before the Civil War, despite numerous obstacles. They became community leaders committed to racial uplift and made notable contributions to the cultural, economic, and political of life of the city.

The Lyons and the Guignons did not actually live in Seneca Village. Many African-Americans owned property in the village but lived downtown. Purchasing property in Seneca Village was an investment for the future. Many were also likely motivated to buy property as a path to suffrage and citizenship. In 1821 New York State passed a law requiring that African-American men own property valued at $250 or more in order to vote. The link between Seneca Village and these families illustrates how, despite the settlement's geographical remoteness, it was still connected to the city's larger African-American community.

Albro Lyons (1814-1896) and his wife, Mary Joseph Marshall (1815-1899), are depicted here around 1860 in a rare photograph of African-Americans connected to Seneca Village. Albro, a noted abolitionist, operated a boarding house for African-American sailors on Pearl Street in downtown Manhattan.

The owners of these plots were connected by marriage—Peter Guignon and Albro Lyons were married to the sisters Rebecca and Mary Marshall. Rebecca inherited the land from her father, Joseph Marshall, a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, who purchased the lots around 1826. Marshall owned his home on Centre Street and therefore may have considered this an investment.



Peter Guignon (1813-1885) worked various jobs, including as a hairdresser. In 1858 he moved to Brooklyn, where he worked at a pharmacy. He was a member of Philomathean Society, a literary society for African-Americans that established a library and organized lectures and discussion groups.

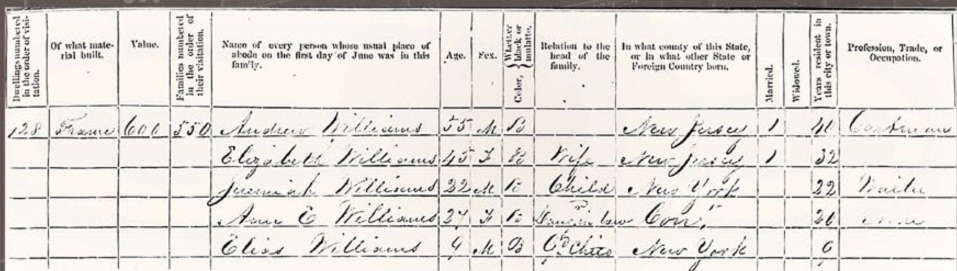
Map: Gardner Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Maps*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Photograph (Guignon):** Courtesy of Carla L. Peterson. From *Black Gotham: A Family History of African-Americans in Nineteenth-Century New York City.* **Photograph (Lyons):** Williamson Photograph Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library.

Seneca Village Community

ANDREW WILLIAMS

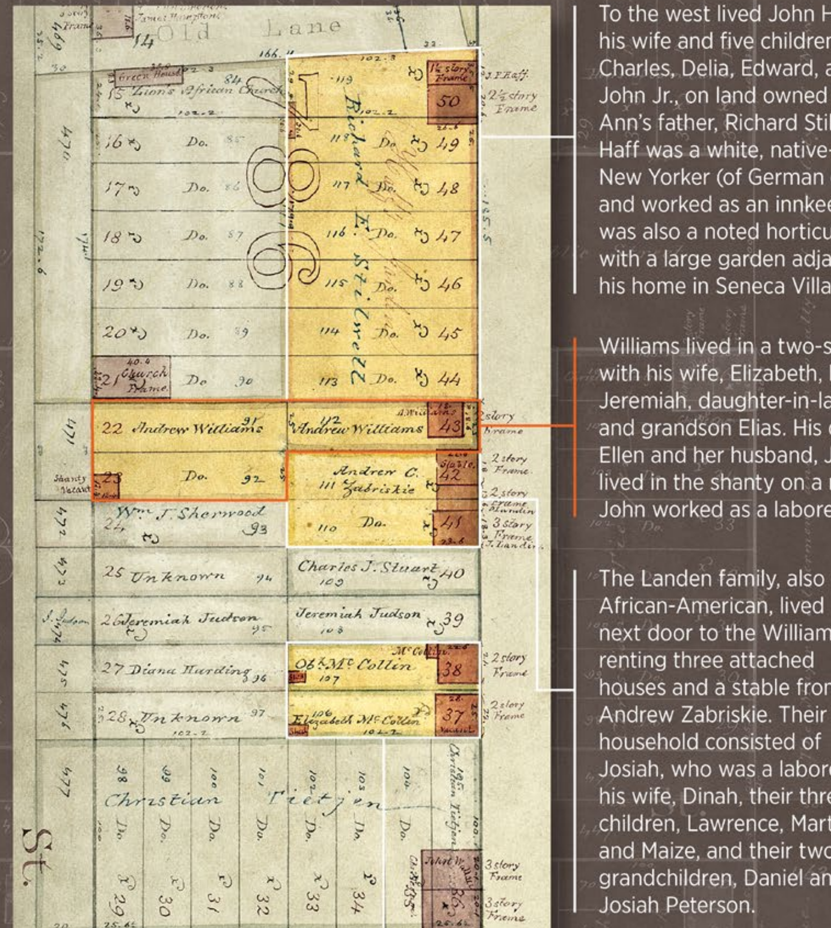
Near this sign stood the house of Andrew Williams and his family. Williams is an important figure in the history of Seneca Village—he was the first African-American to purchase land in the area, in September of 1825.

Williams, who was a bootblack (someone who shined shoes) and lived in downtown Manhattan, was likely affiliated with the AME Zion Church, which also purchased the initial parcels of land in the area. Thirty years later, when plans for Central Park were underway, Williams still owned the same three plots he had originally purchased. Information from an 1855 map and state census allows for a closer look at Williams and some of his neighbors, giving us a better sense of the makeup of the Seneca Village community, which included large extended families and numerous property owners.



Dwellings, numbered in the order of visitation.	Of what material built.	Value.	Families numbered in the order of their visitation.	Names of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June was in this family.	Age.	Sex.	Color. White, black or mulatto.	Relation to the head of the family.	In what county of this State, or in what other State or Foreign Country born.	Married.	Widowed.	Years resident in this city or town.	Profession, Trade, or Occupation.
128	Frame	600	550	Andrew Williams	55	M	B		New Jersey	1		40	Cartman
				Elizabeth Williams	45	F	B	Wife	New Jersey	1		32	
				Jeremiah Williams	22	M	B	Child	New York			22	Waiter
				Ann E Williams	24	F	B	Daughter in law	Conn.			20	
				Elias Williams	4	M	B	Grandchild	New York			6	

Like the map to the right, which lists property owners, residents, and house types, the state and federal censuses are an essential source of information on the residents of Seneca Village. This census record documents the Williams family in 1855. It indicates that Andrew was working as a cartman, a better position than bootblack, the job he had 30 years prior.



To the west lived John Haff and his wife and five children, Ann, Charles, Delia, Edward, and John Jr., on land owned by Ann's father, Richard Stillwell. Haff was a white, native-born New Yorker (of German descent) and worked as an innkeeper. He was also a noted horticulturalist with a large garden adjacent to his home in Seneca Village.

Williams lived in a two-story house with his wife, Elizabeth, his son Jeremiah, daughter-in-law Ann, and grandson Elias. His daughter Ellen and her husband, John Butler, lived in the shanty on a nearby lot. John worked as a laborer.

The Landen family, also African-American, lived next door to the Williams, renting three attached houses and a stable from Andrew Zabriskie. Their household consisted of Josiah, who was a laborer, his wife, Dinah, their three children, Lawrence, Martha, and Maize, and their two grandchildren, Daniel and Josiah Peterson.

The McCollin family were also African-American. Obadiah was a cook and married to Elisabeth Harding, another early purchaser of property in Seneca Village. While it is unclear when they married, they may have met in the village as neighbors. In 1855, they lived with her father, Samuel, and took in 6-year-old Frederick Riddles as a boarder. The boy was the grandson of Nancy Morris, a long-time landowner in the village who had passed away in 1850.

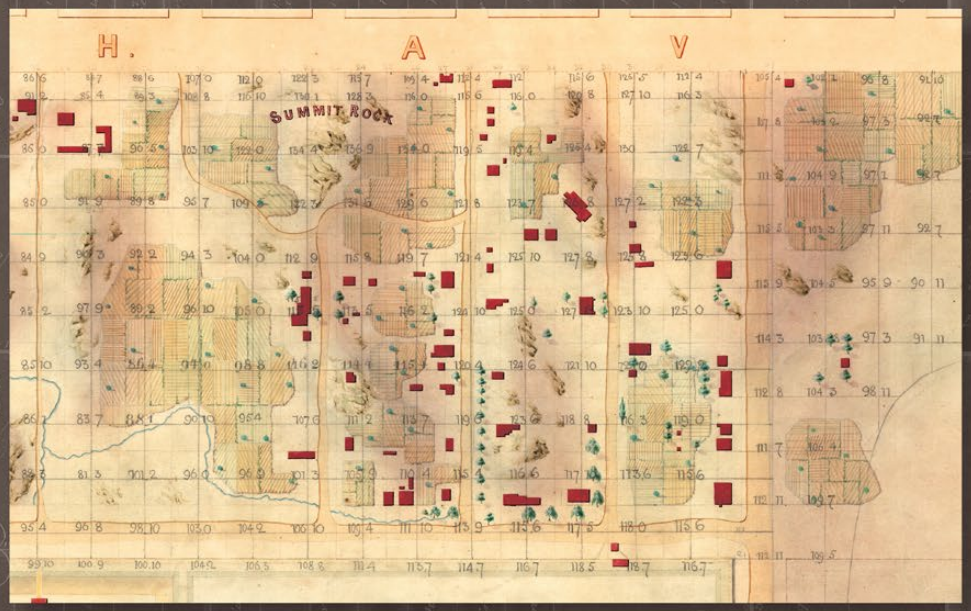
Map: Gardner Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Maps*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives.
Census: New York State Census, *Population Census of the 22nd Ward*, 1855.

Seneca Village Landscape
GARDENS

Near this sign was a large garden maintained by John P. Haff, a noted horticulturalist and local innkeeper of German descent. Although it is unclear if Haff was growing food for consumption by the village, contemporary maps and descriptions suggest that other residents tended gardens, growing fruits and vegetables for their families. Descriptions of other parts of the area that became Central Park mention numerous gardens and access to outdoor space for this purpose was one of the benefits of living this far north.

These gardens were an important way for the community to be more economically self-sufficient. Maps show that in addition to gardens some Seneca Village residents had stables, barns, and sheds, which could have been used to support horticulture as well as for raising livestock. Archeological excavations uncovered evidence of the remains of sheep and goats that may have been raised in the village.

This map shows "Haff's Garden," a large area comparable in size to Spector Playground. The map also indicates a greenhouse on the property to the south, owned by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Considering Haff's horticultural expertise, it is possible that he was involved in the greenhouse.



This map of Seneca Village from 1855, made just before Central Park was created, shows what appear to be small cultivated plots, enclosed areas for livestock, and trees scattered throughout the village. As some of these plots are large, it is possible that they were tended communally.

This photograph from 1862 does not depict Seneca Village, but a house and garden just outside the park's southern border at 59th Street. It gives us some idea of what a garden in Seneca Village might have looked like. The wood structure on the right is inside the park, and a similar one, called the Cop Cot, still stands in that spot today.

Map (right): Egbert Viele, *Map of the lands included in the Central Park*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives. **Photograph:** Victor Prevost Photograph Collection, Rare Book Division, New York Public Library.
Map (left): Gardner Sage, *Central Park Condemnation Maps*, 1856. Courtesy of NYC Municipal Archives.